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A275.2
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Federal Extension Service

CHANGING A PROGRAM INTO ACTION

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Changing a well conceived program into a plan of action that will produce results is a major operation. It takes a thorough understanding of the local situation. It needs the best information and ideas of the farm people, the county workers and the specialists. It often needs the over-all perspective of the administrative group.

For a program to become useful and effective, it is necessary to do something. Ultimately, all programs must be broken down into subject matter. Ultimately, it becomes necessary to plow, plant, protect from disease and parasites, harvest, market, preserve, use and enjoy. And, the family has to live with itself and its neighbors while it is doing this.

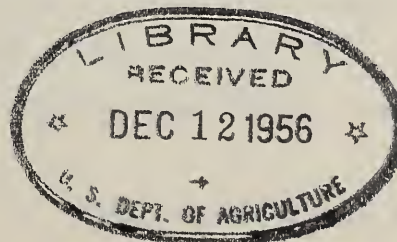
Changing a program into an effective plan of action can be done by several means but there is one route by which it has been done. To illustrate that route, we can use an example from northern Mississippi. This example has three things to recommend it.

1. It is true.
2. It worked.
3. It contains most of the elements common to all such problems.

Ray Purnell, owner and operator of a locker plant at Tupelo, Mississippi, found that his plant did not have enough farmer trade. Inquiry developed the fact that farm income averaged so low that farm families could not afford to rent his lockers.

The next question that Mr. Purnell asked himself was why this farm income was so low. He also asked it of the local people and of the county extension agents. The replies to his questions can be summarized as follows:

1. What is the situation?
 - a. Small farm income.
2. Why is this so?
 - a. Small farms.
 - b. Limited plow land fully cropped in feed, food and cotton.
 - c. Average yearly family income @ \$150.00.
 - d. Hillsides unused.
 - e. Scrub timber unused.
 - f. Family labor used only during the few months when the crop needed attention.



A more intensive use of the limited plow land did not appear to be the answer to the low income of farmers or to lack of business at the locker plant. So, Mr. Purnell tried to figure out what farm families could do with their unused assets that would be of value to both them and to his locker business. He came up with a trial answer, grow broilers.

Then Mr. Purnell asked himself, his friends, and the county extension workers a fourth question. If this growing broilers is such a good idea, how does it happen that farmers are not growing broilers now? The answer to that searching question lined up as follows:

3. What should be done?
 - a. Grow broilers.
4. Why are not folks growing broilers now?
 - a. No interest, information or skill.
 - b. No broilers.
 - c. No adequate local hatchery.
 - d. No adequate feed supply.
 - e. No dressing and grading station.
 - f. No capital.
 - g. No organized market for quality broilers.

Whether the answer to question three, grow broilers, was a practical answer depended on whether the seven major obstacles listed as answers to question four could be overcome.

To overcome those obstacles, the Purnells and the extension workers used almost every extension teaching method from "farm visits" to the food buyers of Memphis hotels to the use of newly developed broiler growers as community leaders among the neighbors who came in later.

When the first batch of frozen poultry was shipped to Memphis, it was news. It is still news as 3,000 locally grown Purnell Pride broilers go through the plant each day, some bound for as far away as New Orleans. There will be more news as the more recently started effort to grade and freeze Tupelo grown berries gains momentum.

This same route can be used to put wheels under other programs and start them rolling.

1. What is the situation?
 - a. Poor health.

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2. Why is it?
 - a. Poor diet.
 - b. Lack of doctors.
 - c. Lack of hospitals.
 - d. Failure to use facilities available.
 - e. Etc.
3. What should be?
 - a. Improved diets (for a starter).
4. Why don't they have better diets now?
 - a. Inadequate garden.
 - b. No cow, calf, pig or poultry.
 - c. Lack of interest, information and skills.

And, as subhead, figure out why they don't have an adequate garden or milk cow or pig or poultry? The obstacles to overcome build into a plan of work that mushrooms violently.

1. What is the situation?
 - a. Only 175 lbs. butter fat per cow per year.
2. Why is it?
 - a. Poor breeding.
 - b. Poor feeding.
 - c. Disease and parasites.
 - d. Poor management, etc.
3. What should be?
 - a. Improved pastures (for a starter).
4. Why don't they have good pastures?
 - a. Lack of lime, phosphate, potash and nitrogen.
 - b. Lack of proper varieties of grass and forage.
 - c. Over grazing.
 - d. Failure to rotate pastures.
 - e. Turning into the pastures too early in spring, etc.

Try those four questions on most any situation. The size of the job may overwhelm you as you see the obstacles build up under question four. The value is that knowing what you are up against, it is easier to decide just where to start, who must help you and what teaching methods to use. It is easier also because you know that your start is a useful one, that it is a real step in the right direction.

